

Understanding Episcopal Liturgy

#12. *Is it a problem if I don't say the right words or don't hold my hands the right way when I am receiving the communion bread?*

No. Questions like this were put to rest about 400 years ago. During the English Reformation different groups in the church attacked others for their use of vestments, candles, words, and other elements of worship. Statues and stained-glass windows were destroyed. People were burned at the stake for their religious practices.

One of the priests who endured this time of hostilities thought it was important to identify the things necessary for salvation, as compared to the things that are not necessary for salvation. He observed that most things we do in the church are not necessary for salvation. He used the term *adiaphora* to describe the things we do that are not necessary for salvation.

Most of our customs and practices fall into the category of *adiaphora*, in other words, they are not necessary for our salvation. This includes practices like the words we say as we receive communion, or the way we hold our hands, or whether we sit, stand or kneel to pray. The only thing that is truly necessary for our salvation is to allow God's love to be in the center of our lives.